



Daniel's Story:

How Did Life Change for Jewish Children in Nazi Germany?

Grade: 10 Canadian History

Time: 45–50 minutes

Topic: Jewish life in Germany, 1933–1938

Learning Goal

Students will examine how the lives of Jewish children in Germany changed after the Nazis came to power in 1933 and understand that persecution developed progressively through exclusion, discrimination, loss of rights and increasing violence.

Materials

- [Daniel's Story](#) (USHMM animated film, 10 minutes)
 - Student viewing chart (included in lesson)
 - Student Handout 1: Pre-Holocaust Photographs
 - Student Handout 2: Frank Cohn and Guy Stern — Survivor Accounts
 - Susan Warsinger video testimony: The Errand
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Context: Before 1933 | 5 minutes

Show students a photograph of Jewish children or a Jewish family in Germany before 1933 (see Student Handout 1: Pre-Holocaust Photographs).

Ask students: **What do we think children's lives were like before the Nazis came to power?**

Establish that Jewish children attended school, had friends, played sports, participated in family and religious life, and were part of their communities, that they lived all over Germany and say that Jews formed 1% of the German population. Some Germans had never met any Jews.

Watch — [Daniel's Story](#) | 10 minutes

As students watch, have them record how Daniel's life changes. Give them a chart that has a list of areas of Daniel's life and then ask what changes in each of these areas?

Area of Daniel's life:	What changes?
Friends and social life	
School	
Family	
Freedom and rights	
Home/community	
Safety	

Consolidation — Building the Trajectory | 10 minutes

As a class or in small groups, place specific examples from Daniel's life along the following progression:

Ordinary Life → Exclusion → Discrimination/Loss of Rights → Violence → Forced Removal

Discuss:

When did Daniel's life begin to change?

Did everything change at once?

How did actions by the Nazi government begin to affect ordinary aspects of a child's life?

Emphasize that the Holocaust developed through a process of escalating persecution; it did not begin with ghettos, deportations or killing centres.



Connecting Daniel to Real Children | 15 minutes

Give students two/three short accounts from children who actually experienced Nazi Germany. The first is a video. The next two are written primary sources.

Susan Warsinger, Bad Kreuznach, Germany

Susan remembers being excited to begin school and wanting to learn. Soon, however, her teacher began reading antisemitic children's books in class. Her classmates knew Susan was Jewish and began bullying and making fun of her. Eventually Jewish children were no longer permitted to attend the public school.

Here is a video link to a story she remembers:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yt8zRF4ISY

Then distribute Student Handout 2: Frank Cohn and Guy Stern — Survivor Accounts. Have students consider the two written accounts alongside Susan Warsinger's video testimony.

Student Questions:

1. What changed in these children's everyday life
2. Where would you place this experience on Daniel's trajectory?
3. What does the real child's experience add to what we saw in *Daniel's Story*?

If you want to push further:

4. Why would someone make a composite film about a fictional "Daniel" when these other stories exist?

Optional Exit Ticket | 5 minutes

If someone says, "The Holocaust began when Jews were sent to concentration camps." Using *Daniel's Story* and one of the real children's experiences, explain why this statement is incomplete.

Key Understanding

Through the experiences of children, students see how Nazi persecution progressively transformed everyday Jewish life—turning classmates, schools, neighbourhoods and public spaces into places of exclusion and danger.

STUDENT HANDOUT 1

Jewish Family Life Before the Holocaust

Look closely at the photographs. What do they suggest about the everyday lives of Jewish families before Nazi persecution transformed their lives?



Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia.



Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia.



Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia.



STUDENT HANDOUT 2

Jewish Children in Nazi Germany: Two Survivor Accounts

FRANK COHN

Context: Frank Cohn was born in Breslau, Germany, in 1925. He began public school before the Nazis came to power. In this account, he describes how his experience at school changed after 1933.

At age six, I entered public school. I don't remember much of my first-grade teacher. He was "old," probably in his 50s. But in second grade, there was a young teacher, and I immediately loved him. I was thrilled to learn that Mr. Schubert would continue with my class in the third grade. But to my horror, as the first day of my third-grade school opened, there was Mr. Schubert in full Nazi uniform, with a swastika armband and lapel pin.

Pretty soon, many of the kids in class also came to school in their Hitler Youth uniforms. And then they sang their Nazi songs, standing up, while I was "allowed" to stay seated. Not a good omen.

One day, going to school, I was chased by a group of kids yelling, "Jew boy!" But I was a fast runner and eluded them. It was on that day that my parents decided to move me into a private, Jewish school.

Source: Frank Cohn, "Eyewitness to History: Frank Cohn," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Survivor Reflections and Testimonies.

GUY STERN

Context: Guy Stern was born in Hildesheim, Germany, in 1922. He attended school with both Jewish and non-Jewish children. In this oral history testimony, he describes how one of his friendships changed after the Nazis came to power.

[I had] Jewish as well as Christian friends, and it seemed before 1933 as if some level of integration had been reached. Christian friends came to my house. I to, I to theirs. We were invited to the same parties together and of course it all came unstuck, and viciously, in 1933.

[interviewer]: Tell us about that.

Uh I'll give, I think I can best illustrate it by one example. I had known one of my friends in high school even before I got to high school, which starts, of course, started of course even as it does now in Germany at age ten. And uh his name was Heinrich, Heinrich Hennes, and uh he he when the first nasty things happened in the school yard, he be...he uh out of conviction became our stoutest defender. He would, he would, he would ...he would engage in fisticuffs in order to



protect us. He was highly intelligent and then the, he was also of course in the Nazi youth organization as everybody in the class was, and uh finally uh he was taken aside more and more by his youth leader, and this youth leader and the propaganda managed to turn him around completely and he became our worst enemy.

Source: Guy Stern, "Guy Stern describes losing a friend to membership in the Hitler Youth," oral history testimony, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia.